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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-17

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 AID-20 PRS-01 INR-10 RSR-01 RSC-01 /051 W
---------- 026868
R 101449 Z MAY 73
FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4408

C O N F I D E N T I A L MONTEVIDEO 1417

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, UY

SUBJ: COMMERCIAL MOTION PICTURE ON MITRIONE CASE

1. PERSONNEL OF THIS MISSION, EVEN THOSE LIKE MYSELF WHO ARRIVED AFTER THE MITRIONE TRAGEDY, ARE FOLLOWING THE NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS OF THE EVENTS AND COMMENTARIES SURROUNDING THE AMERICAN SHOWING OF THE COMMERCIAL MOTION PICTURE " STATE OF SIEGE", WITH CONSIDERABLE INTEREST. NONE OF US HERE HAVE SEEN THE FILM. WE THEREFORE CANNOT COMMENT DIRECTLY ON IT. THROUGH PRESS CLIPPINGS HOWEVER WE ARE AWARE THAT THE FILM PURPORTS TO DEPICT IN A FACTUAL MANNER THE KIDNAPPING INTERROGATION AND MURDER OF DAN MITRIONE OF THIS MISSION WHICH OCCURRED IN MONTEVIDEO IN EARLY AUGUST 1970, AND IN SUCH A MANNER AS TO MAKE JUDGEMENTS ON U. S. PROGRAMS IN URUGUAY.

2. FROM REVIEWER' S COMMENTS, WE BELIEVE THE FILM CONTAINS MIS-STATEMENTS, DISTORTIONS AND OMISSIONS OF FACT AND CHRONOLOGY DESIGNED TO SHOW THE PUBLIC SAFETY PROGRAM, THE AID PROGRAM, AND U. S.
POLICY IN GENERAL IN URUGUAY, AND BY EXTENSION IN LATIN AMERICA, IN THE WORST POSSIBLE LIGHT. IT ALSO APPARENTLY DISTORTS GREATLY, IF NOT FALSIFIES, THE SITUATION IN URUGUAY IN THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS.

3. WE HAVE NOTED AND APPROVEOF THE DEPARTMENT' S COMMENTS OF APRIL 18 ON THE DISTORTIONS OF THE FILM. WE HOPE THEY HAVE BEEN ADEQUATE IN ALERTING THOSE INTERESTED IN THE FACTS OF THIS CASE TO THE SHORTCOMINGS OF THE FILM. IF THIS IS NOT THE CASE, MANY SERIOUS AND SINCERE VIEWERS OF THE FILM MAY ACCEPT THE CLAIMS OF THE DIRECTOR COSTA- GAVRAS AND THE FILM THAT IT REPRESENTS AN OBJECTIVE " SEARCH
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FOR THE TRUTH" IN THE MITRIONE CASE, AND WILL BE UNAWARE THAT THE FILM DEPARTS FROM THE TRUTH IN MANY SIGNIFICANT ASPECTS.

4. WE ASSUME THAT AN INFORMATION PACKAGE ON THE MITRIONE CASE AND THE SITUATION IN URUGUAY IS BEING PREPARED AND SENT TO ALL INQUIRERS AND TO NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES THAT HAVE REVIEWED, OR CAN BE EXPECTED TO REVIEW THE FILM. WE ARE SURE THE DEPARTMENT' S PUBLIC RELATIONS SPECIALISTS WILL HAVE OTHER EQUALLY OR MORE EFFECTIVE

PROGRAMS TO COUNTER THE MISTAKEN IMPRESSIONS GIVEN BY THE FILM.

5. WE ARE READY TO PROVIDE ANY INFORMATION WE CAN THAT WILL ASSIST IN THIS EFFORT AND HOPE THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR THE EMBASSY TO REVIEW AND CONTRIBUTE TO RELEASES WHICH MAY BE MADE IN WASHINGTON ON THE MITRIONE CASE.

6. IN INFORMATION ISSUED BY THE DEPT ON THE FILM, WE THINK IT IMPORTANT TO TRY TO EMPHASIZE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

A) MITRIONE WAS NOT A CIA OR FBI AGENT. HE WAS AN EXPERIENCED EXPERT IN POLICE WORK.

B) HE NEITHER TAUGHT NOR ADVOCATED POLICE BRUTALITY, TORTURE OR OTHER EXTRA- LEGAL TECHNIQUES. ON THE CONTRARY, HE WAS TOTALLY OPPOSED TO THESE METHODS AND SAW HIS WORK AS TEACHING THE POLICE TO USE PROFESSIONAL METHODS SO EFFECTIVELY THAT THEY WOULD NOT EVEN
BE TEMPTED TO USE EXTRA- LEGAL METHODS.

C) THE TUPAMAROS NEVER REPRESENTED MORE THAN A SMALL FRACTION OF THE PEOPLE OF URUGUAY. THEY ORIGINATED AS A SPLINTER GROUP OF THE UNION POPULAR PARTY WHICH IN THE 1962 ELECTIONS POLLED ONLY 2.3 PER CENT OF THE VOTE. A REVIEW OF THE ELECTORAL HISTORY OF FREE ELECTIONS
SHOWS THAT THE TUPAMAROS NEVER HAD MORE THAN NEGLIGIBLE POPULAR SUPPORT. IN THE 1971 ELECTIONS AT THE HEIGHT OF TERRORIST POWER THE GROUP MOST CLOSELY ALIGNED WITH THETUPAMAROS (THE ERRO FACTION)
GOT NO MORE THAN 4.3 PER CENT OF THE TOAL VOTES. IT WAS BECAUSE OF THEIR LACK OF POPULAR SUPPORT THAT THEY RESORTED TO TERRORISM AND VIOLENCE WHICH INEVITABLY BROUGHT REPRESSIVE COUNTER MEASURES BY THE CONSTITUTED AUTHORITIES.

D) FAR FROM BEING IDEALISTIC SOCIALIST " ROBIN HOODS", THE TUPAMAROS HAVE STRONG TOTALITARIAN NEO- FASCIST ASPECTS, THEY RECRUITED COMMON CRIMINALS FOR THEIR ORGANIZATION. PRIOR TO THE MITRIONE MURDER THEY HAD ALREADY KILLED 11 URUGUAYANS. TO DATE THEY
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HAVE KILLED 45 URUGUAYANS, AND MANY OF THESE MURDERS WERE AS SAVAGE AND COLD- BLOODED AS THATOF MITRIONE. (SEE MVD AIRGRAM A-168

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OF OCT 8, 1972). ANY ATTEMPT TO PORTRAY THESE DERANGED POWER- MADE TERRORISTS AS IDEALISTIC REFORMERS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MAJORITY OF THE URUGUAYAN PEOPLE IS A FUNDAMENTAL LIE.

E) AT NO TIME DID MR. COSTA- GAVRAS OR ANYONE ELSE ASSOCIATED WITH THE FILM APPROACH THIS EMBASSY OR MAKE ANY ATTEMPT WHATSO-EVER OF WHICH WE ARE AWARE TO INFORM THEMSELVES ON THE NATURE OF THE OVER $100 MILLION ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FINANCED BY THE UNITED STATES IN URUGUAY.

7. WHILE WE ARE PLEASED TO RESPOND TO INDIVIDUAL QUERIES ON THE MITRIONE CASE SUC
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